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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000649

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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER, D. TEITELBAUM
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [Z1](#) [MDC](#)

SUBJECT: MDC RESTRUCTURING ITSELF FOR ELECTIONS

REF: HARARE 633 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: On April 15, MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai reported to the Ambassador that the party was radically restructuring itself with a focus on contesting elections, despite the fact that the party had not made a final decision to contest the March 2005 polls. Tsvangirai asserted that Mugabe's concern for legitimacy constituted an opening for the MDC in Zimbabwe's political future. This analysis misses the mark; Mugabe is concerned about legitimacy but also appears bent on emasculating the opposition. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (C) In a discussion at the Residence Tsvangirai opened by commenting that in the fallout of the loss in Zengeza (Ref) the party was united on the priority of a level playing field for future elections. Tsvangirai thanked the USG for its statement condemning the Zengeza poll as unfair, citing a similar EU statement issued on April 15 (e-mailed to AF/S). He said the party did think Minister Without Portfolio Elliott Manyika shot MDC youth Francis Chinozvinya (Ref).

Focus on Elections

[13.](#) (C) Tsvangirai reported to the Ambassador that in an April 3 - 4 retreat with the thirty-seven member MDC National Executive, the party leadership had resolved to reorganize the party with a strategy to prepare for upcoming elections. Tsvangirai said the re-organization was intended to maintain

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the party's vertical command structure, while also allowing for horizontal consultation among party structures and avoiding exclusion of any segment of the membership. He said the party would endeavor to be more proactive rather than reactive, less functionally driven and more program driven. While the leadership itself would be focused on strategic decisions, authority for operations would be delegated to directors of different departments.

[14.](#) (C) Tsvangirai said the defining feature of the re-organization would be an elections directorate within the President's office led by Ian Makoni, MDC advisor and CEO of the Zimbabwean financial services company First Mutual. Tsvangirai said all other program areas would fall under this

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elections directorate, including departments focused on constituencies such as civil society, women, youth, labor, and one on contacts with the diplomatic community. Tsvangirai said the party would attempt to encourage these

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partners to play a greater role in party activities. He said the party would sometimes hold direct primaries to select candidates - to strengthen grassroots connections - as opposed to the past practice of selection by party structures.

[15.](#) (C) Tsvangirai said the new organization and new appointments would be finalized by about April 19 before presentation to the broader party staff and membership.

Boycott or Not?

[16.](#) (C) Tsvangirai said that notwithstanding the party's refocus on elections, they had not made a final decision whether to boycott the March 2005 general parliamentary elections. Tsvangirai said that at the retreat Dr. Lovemore Madhuku, Chairman of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), asked what the purpose of contesting elections would be: to stay in Parliament or to win power? Madhuku noted that the MDC could not win power given the prevailing elections environment, and even a democratic outcome from the 2005 polls would not change the whole political scenario.

Mugabe and His Legacy

17. (C) Tsvangirai commented that he thought Mugabe was trying to spruce up his image and rescue his legacy before retiring. He said that legitimacy was one of Mugabe's top concerns as evidenced by the anti-corruption campaign and pursuit of electoral victories. Tsvangirai said it was important for the MDC to send signals to Mugabe that he could retire with dignity. He said that some within ZANU-PF viewed Mugabe as a spent force and no longer depended on his political patronage. Tsvangirai said that Mugabe's anti-corruption campaign had hit an internal wall within ZANU-PF, i.e. senior officials like Speaker of Parliament Emmerson Mnangagwa and Finance Minister Christopher Kuruneri were unlikely to be prosecuted.

Talks on Elections

18. (C) Turning to the Ncube-Chinamasa talks, Tsvangirai reported that Chinamasa had recently said they could talk about elections and the playing field, but not about the presidency. Tsvangirai interpreted this to mean that political co-habitation was not presently on the table. Tsvangirai emphasized that the MDC was still insisting on the

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need to discuss political legitimacy and to hold presidential elections concurrent with parliamentary ones.

Likely Maize Shortfall

19. (C) Tsvangirai discussed food assistance to Zimbabwe and noted that Minister of Agriculture Joseph Made has predicted that Zimbabwe will harvest 1.8 million metric tons of maize this year, sufficient for the country's needs. Tsvangirai said Shadow Minister of Agriculture Renson Gasela predicted Zimbabwe would harvest 6 - 800,000 metric tons, leaving a shortfall of about or over a million metric tons.

10. (C) COMMENT: In the context of conflicting press reports, Tsvangirai put to rest (for now) questions about whether the party had decided to boycott the 2005 parliamentary elections. It appears they have not made a final decision, and furthermore are focusing the whole party toward contesting elections. Other MDC leaders have projected this message publicly. The discussion at the retreat about contesting the 2005 polls points to the difficult position the party is in. Even a favorable outcome to the 2005 polls would not decisively alter the overall political landscape because ZANU-PF would still control the presidency. The anti-corruption campaign appears more a consolidation of power within ZANU-PF and a public relations tactic rather than a reflection of Mugabe's concern for legitimacy and his legacy. It remains Tsvangirai's and the MDC's hope that Mugabe's concern for legitimacy represents an opening for the MDC in Zimbabwe's political life. We would agree the concept of legitimacy is important to Mugabe, but we see the ruling party manufacturing its own definition of that, rather than accepting international opinion, or a real role for the MDC in Zimbabwe's political future.
SULLIVAN